ABSTRACT

The present invention encompasses monoclonal and chimeric antibodies that bind to lipoteichoic acid of Gram positive bacteria. The antibodies also bind to whole bacteria and enhance phagocytosis and killing of the bacteria *in vitro* and enhance protection from lethal infection *in vivo*. The mouse monoclonal antibody has been humanized and the resulting chimeric antibody provides a previously unknown means to diagnose, prevent and/or treat infections caused by gram positive bacteria bearing lipoteichoic acid. This invention also encompasses a peptide mimic of the lipoteichoic acid epitope binding site defined by the monoclonal antibody. This epitope or epitope peptide mimic identifies other antibodies that may bind to the lipoteichoic acid epitope. Moreover, the epitope or epitope peptide mimic provides a valuable substrate for the generation of vaccines or other therapeutics.